The Thirteenth Commandment

By RUPERT HUGHES

DAPHNE AGAIN TURNS TO CLAY, BUT AS THEY PLAN FOR THE FUTURE A NEW BLOW FALLS.

Synopsis.—Clay Wimburn, a young New Yorker on a visit to Cleveland, meets pretty Daphne Kip, whose brother is in the same office with Clay in Wall street. After a whirlwind courtship they become engaged. Daphne goes to New York with her mother to buy her trousseau. Daphne's brother, Bayard, has just married and left for Europe with his bride, Leila. Daphne and her mother install themselves in Bayard's flat. Daphne meets Tom Duane, man-about-town, who seems greatly attracted to her. Daphne accidentally discovers that Clay is penniless, except for his salary. Baynard and his wife return to New York unexpectedly. The three women set out on a shopping excursion and the two younger women buy expensive gowns, having them charged to Bayard. Bayard is furious over the expense, seeing hard times ahead. Daphne, indignant, declares she will earn her own living and breaks her engagement with Clay. Through an introduction by Duane, Daphne induces Reben, a theatrical magnate, to give her a position in one of his companies. Her first rehearsal is a fiasco, but Reben, at Duane's request, gives her another chance. Sudden illness of Miss Kemble, the star, gives Daphne her chance, but her acting is a dismal failure. She is consoled by Tom Duane.

CHAPTER XII—Continued.

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Satan or Raphael had whispered to her an invitation to revisit the scene of her late humiliation with Clay. With Duane's magic purse there would be no danger of a snub from the waiters; with his own car there would be no risk of footing it home.

Then an imp of mischief spoke for her and said, "All right!"

Duane told the chauffeur and the car shot like a javelin from the lighted street into the deep forest-night of Central park.

What would Clay say? But, after all, he had failed her in a crisis. Perhaps he had turned his heart elsewhere. Men were impatient, vindictive, fickle.

When Claremont was reached and Duane handed Miss Kip out he noted that her hand was hotter than his own and a little quick to escape, her face was flushed and her lips parted as if with excitement. He assumed that the speed of the ride and the tang of adventure were to blame.

While the waiters were serving the supper and while he was attacking it with the frank appetite of honest hunger she recounted the evening's disaster as calmly as if it were the story of somebody else. In fact, she was standing off and regarding herself with the eyes of an alien. We change so fast that the persons we were yesterday are already strangers, and their acts the acts of distant relatives. Her calm was really the numbness of shock. The anguish would come tomorrow.

"I can't understand myself at all," Daphne said. "I went through every one of the motions, but I couldn't reach the audience once. I was like a singer with a bad cold singing in a foreign language—you don't know what the song is all about, but you know that it never quite gets on the key."

"You mustn't be discouraged."

"Oh, yes, I must! I couldn't be an actress in a thousand years. Mr. Batterson told me so himself."

Duane felt the truth of this, but it hurt him to have her feel it. It offended his chivalry to realize how impolite fate could be to so pretty a girl. He hated to see her reduced to the necessity of proving how plucky she could be. He tried to find an escape for her. He said:

"You're far too good for the stage."

"I don't believe that for a minute," she protested. "But I've got to find something I can do."

"May I help you to decide?"

"If you only would! But I'm getting to be a nuisance."

"You are a—a—to me you are a—well, you're not a nuisance."

He dared not tell her what she was, especially as the waiter had set the bill at his elbow and was standing off in an attitude of ill-concealed impatience for the tip, which he knew would be large. Mr. Duane always gave the normal ten per cent and a bit extra. He tipped wisely but not too well, knowing that an extravagant tip wins a waiter's contempt almost more than none at all. The head waiter fairly cooed "Good night" and almost gave them a blessing.

The starter had Mr. Duane's car waiting for him at the curb and lifted his hat with one hand as he smuggled a quarter away with the other. He stepped in to lay the linen laprobe over their knees with reverence, closed the door exquisitely and murmured, "Good night!"

The car was an aristocrat; it floated from the curb with a swanlike sweep.

Daphne thought of Clay and herself plodding homeward. She seemed to see them or their wraiths staggering disconsolately along. She felt very sorry for them. Here was a chance to save one of them—both of them, in fact; for in taking her financial burden from Clay's shoulders she would be twice strengthening him. If she were to accept Duane as her husband then her problems would be solved—and Clay would be free of her.

To be Mrs. Tom Duane; to step into the society of society; to lift her father and mother from a position of meekness in Cleveland to a post of distinction in New York; to solve at once all the hateful, loathsome, belittling riddles of money; to be the bejeweled and feted and idolized wife and mistress of this young American grand duke; to buy that impossible trousseau, or better; to live in a New York palace instead of a flat; to go about in her own limousine instead of an occasional taxicab; to be fortune's darling instead of a member of the working classes, struggling along with bent neck under a yoke beside a discouraged laboring man!

When the car reached her building she was resolved to see Duane no more. She could not tell him so. After all, he had been everything that was courtesy and charity. It would hardly

She Stared at Her Image in the Mirror.

have been polite to treat him with absolute indifference. Duane got down and helped her out and took her to the door, which was locked at this late hour. While they waited for the doorman to answer the bell she was paying him his wages:

"You are wonderfully kind. I had a gorgeous evening. You saved my life."

She had said more than she intended—if not more than he had earned.

"Then may I call soon?"

"Of course."

"Tomorrow?"

"I—well, I'll let you know."

"Fine! Telephone me at— I'll write it out for you. I'm not often at the club where you found me, and my number isn't in the book." He wrote on his card his telephone address and gave it to her as the doorman appeared.

He murmured, "Don't forget." She murmured, "I won't." Both said "Good night." Then the doorman gathered her in and hoisted her to her lowly eyrie. It was very different from where she would have gone as Mrs. Duane.

But when she was in her room she tore his card to pieces—after she had looked at it. She stared at her image in the mirror. She hated what she saw there.

She vowed to break her promise to Tom Duane. She vowed to forget his telephone number. But it danced about in the dark long after she had closed her eyes.

The next morning she overslept even beyond the extra hour the Chivvises permitted themselves and the stranger within their gates on Sundays.

When Daphne appeared at breakfast, trying not to yawn, Mrs. Chivvis greeted her with a voice as cold and dry as the toast, and as brittle:

"You were rather late getting in last night—or this morning, rather."

Daphne's answer was not an explanation, but it was better:

"Oh, I know it, Mrs. Chivvis, but I lost my position last night. Yes! I played the principal part and killed it, and now I'm not going on the stage any more."

Mrs. Chivvis was touched. "You poor child! It really is—just too bad!" She pondered, then she brightened: "I'm sorry you're disappointed, but I'm glad you're not to be in the theater. It must be very wicked."

"It's mighty difficult," said Daphne.

Mrs. Chivvis thought a moment more, then she said:

"Did I tell you?— No, I don't believe I did—you were away—but Mr. Chivvis gets his vacation next week. He's got to take it when his turn comes. The man who was going now couldn't be spared, so we have to leave Tuesday. I'm going, of course, so I can't give you your meals. You can get your breakfasts in the kitchenette. Of course I'll allow off whatever is right."

"Oh," Daphne said. "I'll be all right, I guess."

Daphne had not realized how much she depended on Mrs. Chivvis till now. She was to be left alone at the very time when she was most in need of society. The whole world was forsaking her.

CHAPTER XIII.

When the Chivvises had gone Daphne assailed the task of composing her letter of resignation from Reben's employ. It was not easy to resign with dignity and the necessary haste.

She sent it off by messenger. It was none too prompt, for Reben had already dictated a very polite request for Daphne's head. When he received her letter he recalled his stenographer and dictated a substitute for his first letter. In this he expressed his regret at learning Daphne's decision to resign; the former understudy had come back from the road, he said, and would resume her work. He begged Daphne to accept the inclosed check for two weeks' salary in lieu of the usual notice, and hoped that she would believe him faithfully hers.

Daphne felt a proud impulse to return the fifty dollars. She wrote a letter to go with it. She looked again, and saw it was the first money she had ever earned. She hated to let it go. She decided to frame it and keep it to point to in after years as the beginning of her great fortune.

Late in the afternoon, when the western sky was turning into a loom for crimson tapestries almost as rich as her own dreams, she went to her brother's apartment.

There the New Girl found the Old Woman in the throes of finance. Leila had brought her check book and her bank book to her husband. Her affairs were in a knot.

He laughingly offered to help her. She was hurt by his laughter, but not half so deeply as he was by his discovery of her monetary condition. He had established her bank account in a mood of adoration, a precious sacrifice on the altar of love. She had not cherished it, but scattered it heedlessly. And money was peculiarly precious now in the final agonies of the hard times, when only the fittest of the fittest could survive the last tests. Credit was the water cask, and dollars were the hard biscuits of a boatload of survivors from a wreck. Land might be reached if they held out, but self-denial was vital.

Bayard gazed at Leila with wondering love and terror. She was both divinity and devil in his eyes. He groaned:

"Are you trying to wreck me? You know how hard I'm working and how much I need money in my business and how much it means to your future, but you won't stop buying and charging and burning my poor little earnings. We discharged a stenographer yesterday because we wanted to save her salary of fifteen dollars—and here's a check for a pair of shoes for you that cost sixteen.

"But tell me one thing more before I'm carted off to Bloomingdale in a straitjacket. Why, in heaven's name, why—admitting you just had to have that pitiful little pair of shoes—why, when you wrote the check, didn't you subtract it from your balance instead of adding it? I ask you!"

"Oh, did I do that?" she asked, looking over his shoulder. "So I did!" and she put her cheek close to his and giggled.

He shook his head in imbecile infatuation, and drew her around into his arms.

That was what Daphne overheard when the maid let her in. She found Leila resting in Bayard's lap.

Bayard did not tell Daphne what his conference with Leila had been. He simply closed the check book and the bank book and said to Leila: "I'll send the bank my check for thirty-eight cents and ask 'em to close their account. They'll be mighty glad to do it."

"And so will I," said Leila. "It was awfully hard work keeping track of every little penny. I'd much rather have a regular allowance in cash every week."

"All right!" said Bayard. "We'll try that—next week."

Daphne was not told what all this talk was about, but she made a fair guess, though she pretended not to.

She told about her failure and her future and Leila praised her courage and her optimism. They dined cheerfully and Bayard decided that the best preparation for the hard work ahead of him would be an evening of gayety. He invited his wife and his sister to go with him to the Winter Garden, where the typical "Sunday concert" of New York was given.

CHAPTER XIV.

Then the Chivvises came back from their vacation unexpectedly early. They had found the hotels expensive and Mr. Chivvis was afraid that his job would be snatched from him if he were not there to hold it down.

Clay called on Daphne that evening and the Chivvises retreated to their own room. But as they could be overheard it was evident that they could overhear, and the lovers found no chance to say any of the things that frightened their souls.

One evening Daphne said to Clay in as low a voice as he could hear: "Mrs. Chivvis is growing uneasy, honey, about our being together every evening. I told her we were engaged, but she didn't seem convinced. Perhaps you would let me wear that beautiful engagement ring again. I was a fool to give it back to you. May I have it or—"

Clay blenched in misery. "I—I'm afraid I— You see, I hadn't paid much on it; and last week I had an insulting letter from the jeweler. He threatened to sue me and notify my firm, and I—well, I had to send it back."

He was so downcast that she answered with mock cheer: "Oh, that's all right, honey; it doesn't matter. After all, it's only a ring. And we have each other."

"But we haven't each other. This way of living is driving me crazy. I'll be all right as soon as these hard times are over and I can make some commissions. But it's so dismal to wait. Couldn't we get married and live on my salary?"

"I could if you could."

He caught her in his arms so violently that she squealed.

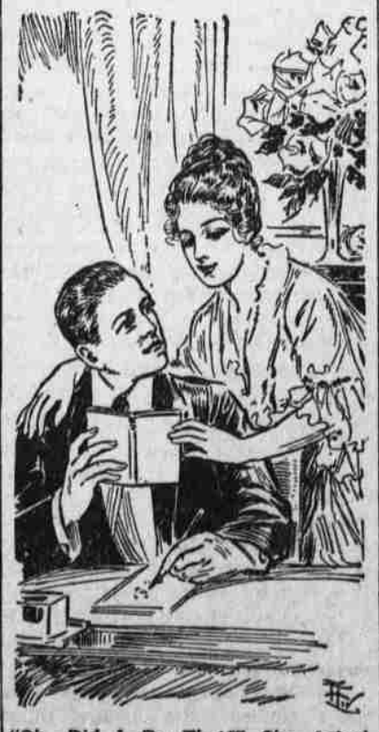
The next day Clay telephoned to her his firm had just offered him the choice of accepting half his salary or turning in his resignation. It was really impossible for two to live on half of what was hardly enough for one.

Daphne cried a long while in her room. She got out her list of ways to earn fifty thousand dollars again and cried over that.

There is much foolish and futile protest against the nowadays woman who goes into business outside her home. But the fact is that it is her business that began it. Her business left the home first and she is merely following it to the places where new conditions and inventions have centralized and mechanized it.

New conditions have taken her distaff and her washtub and her cookery and gossip into the woolen mills and steam laundries and restaurants and telephone exchanges. She has had to go thither to do her necessary work. Even the entertainers, the singers, dancers, tellers of stories, who used to stir the seraglios and the castle halls have been gathered into opera houses and theaters and into vaudeville and moving picture palaces.

Daphne, having no gifts for spinning, cooking, or laundry, tried the theater. Her old-fashioned lover protested, and she went, anyway. But she was not suited to the theater, and she retreated with nothing to show for her expedition except her shattered pride and the fifty-dollar check for two weeks' salary.



"Oh, Did I Do That?" She Asked, Looking Over His Shoulder.

Daphne began anew to hunt for work; work, the thrice blessing that kills time and makes money and tames passion. But the world seemed to be full of every other trouble except work. Even had she been skilled, as she was not, it would have availed her little, since skilled laborers were being turned off by the thousands. And unskilled laborers were being turned off by the tens of thousands.

Clay had saved nothing against the rainy season. He had found his salary too small for his courtship requisites; now that his salary was halved his courtship had to be reduced to the minimum of expense.

Bayard and Leila had more money to spend, and they made ambitious voyages. But Daphne and Clay must swelter with the other stay-at-home millions. Clay denied himself even the two weeks' vacation allotted to him. Bayard took his, however, and carried

Leila Had Decided That It Was Better for Her Health to Stay at Newport Till the Cooler Weather Came and Her Summer Wardrobe Had Been Worn Out.

Leila off to Newport, where they boarded humbly, if expensively. While they were gone, at their suggestion, Daphne moved down into their apartment. It was large and beautiful, and, as Clay said, it was "not infested with Chivvises."

Now and then Clay quarreled with Daphne because of her obstinate determination to have a trade of her own. Then they made up. And quarreled anew—lovers' quarrels, summer storms that break the sultry tension of the air and make peace endurable.

Bayard came back alone. Leila had decided that it was better for her health to stay at Newport till the cooler weather came and her summer wardrobe had been worn out.

So Bayard joined the army of town-tied husbands, the summer widowers. He went back once a week on furlough to spend a Newport Sabbath with his wife. He became one of the Friday-night-to-Monday-morning excursionists. There was leisure enough in his office.

He insisted on Daphne's keeping her room in his apartment, and of evenings he affixed himself to her and Clay and made their company a crowd. But they welcomed him as a chaperon of a sort. Also, he paid his way with liberality, except for occasional spasms of retrenchment, when he economized atrociously. He predicted that good times would never come again. The whole world had gone to pot and would never come out.

Suddenly he changed his tune; suddenly the whisper went about that hard times were ending.

In his bachelor days, when Bayard was growing in commercial stature like a young giant, he had regarded his business with all the warmth of a poet. His office building was his Acropolis and his office the peculiar temple of his muse; and her name was Profit. He thrilled like a poet to the epic inspiration of a big sale, and he knew a joy akin to the poet's revision of his scansion if he devised a scheme for reducing overhead charge or wastage.

Bayard, led on by the visions of riches to be won in Wall street, draws all his savings from the bank and begins speculating in stocks. Then at far-off Sarajevo rang out the shot that plunged the world into the frightful nightmare of war. Bayard was among the first casualties. Read about it in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Raining "Cats and Dogs."

In England the male blossoms of the willows are called "cats and dogs" and a rainstorm would shake them off and strew them on the ground. Hence arose the expression "raining cats and dogs."

Never Was Lucky.

After the ceremony the couple were receiving congratulations when I heard the pessimistic bridegroom remark to an enthusiastic friend, "Well, I dunno, Jim; I never did have much luck."—Chicago Tribune.

Unkind Comment.

Foxwell—I was twenty-two the second of April.

Clementia—A day late as usual.

Too many people feather their nests with borrowed plumes.

It takes a real genius to originate new ideas in love making.